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STATINTL

The Soviets Have Them Too

Americans who may feel depressed at the news that a United States Army captain who had access to important military secrets has defected to East Germany should be reminded that this sort of thing happens more often to the Communists than it does to us. It also is true that while Soviet agents have got away with many important secrets in the United States, Britain and Canada, the Western countries haven't been wholly asleep when it comes to espionage. There is the rather sensational spy trial just finished in Moscow to prove it.

The two men on trial were a Russian, Oleg V. Penkovsky, and a British businessman, Greville M. Wynne. Penkovsky is former Soviet science official who once boasted that he had friends in high places. Whether he did may still have to be proved, but it is clear that he had access to a great variety of Soviet secrets, scientific and otherwise, and that many of these were relayed to Britain and the United States. The alleged British courier was Wynne.

It is reported that the material Penkovsky transmitted was even more valuable than the information gained by our U2 planes when they were operating over Russia, though it is doubtful whether the Soviets or the Western powers will reveal for a long time, if ever, precisely what data Penkovsky handed over.

The Soviets build up their spy

trials, presumably for the purpose of scaring off other would-be espionage agents. Penkovsky was arrested last December. His trial has been six months in the making. It was staged with a careful eye to drama, and the sentence of death was heard round the world—as was the seemingly merciful eight-year term for Wynne.

Regardless of penalties Western agents will continue to pry loose Soviet secrets, and in this they will have the assistance of disgruntled, disillusioned or just plain grasping Soviet citizens. And doubtless the Western countries from time to time will turn up Communist spies, since espionage is a necessary part of every country's system of defense.

Our own spying methods must be more elaborate and more profuse than Russia's because the Soviets reveal so little through ordinary channels of what is going on in their country. Steel production, for instance, is a state secret in Russia, although here it is available to anyone who can read a newspaper. Some buildings in the center of Moscow never are identified by name or purpose, although it would be hard to think of a single building in this country, including the new CIA building, the identity or purpose of which is a mystery to anyone.

Spies will be with us as long as nations have reason to conceal information of any kind from one another. Our hope must be that the West's spies are more numerous and more proficient than their Communist counterparts.